

# 20 21

## ANNUAL REPORT & Year in Review

City of San Antonio Development Services



## 01

# Welcome

FY 2021 continued to present challenges for our department as a group and certainly as individuals. I am extremely proud of what DSD was able and continues to accomplish. If you look at all we have gone through - COVID, an incredibly challenging issue we are still dealing with; reallocating code officers to enforce the emergency declaration during the first six months of the fiscal year; and an economy we planned for that didn't happen resulting in our getting behind with resources - the department met these challenges while serving the community well. We were asked to do more than ever before, and the team not only rose to the task, but persevered through it all.

A couple of items stand out in my mind as top achievements this year. One is the completeness of the Code Enforcement emergency declaration team. The direct impact we had on our

community's safety was immeasurable. Code officers pushed forward and did thousands of inspections to make sure residents followed the declaration. This was unexpected, and the code enforcement team did an amazing job.

Second, is the way we run board and commission meetings in a virtual setting through WebEx (created last year). Meetings and processes were efficient, and actually increased community engagement by affording residents the option to leave messages or call in during the meetings.

There was also a big shift to e-commerce this year by fully integrating the services we provide into BuildSA. Land development, permits, plan review, inspections and code enforcement are now all incorporated within one system to increase staff efficiency, offer



24/7 access, and improve customer service. We are now a more sustainable department by continuing our work from home flexibility and having very little paper involved in our processes. Of course, no transition is perfect, and we will continue to focus on refining BuildSA this coming year. Anyone uncomfortable with technology can still receive the same levels of service by coming to the One Stop and interacting with us in person.

#### NEXT YEAR

With a hiring moratorium, multiple retirements, and a significant increase in workload, DSD experienced more vacancies in 2021 than in any given year. We were able to get 29 new positions in the FY 2022 approved budget, and will continue to evaluate the need for more. This is a big item we need to overcome the first quarter of this upcoming fiscal year.

I believe FY 2022 will continue to present challenges. It will certainly be a year of engaging the community more, especially as we tackle all the upcoming changes to the municipal code – all building-related and maintenance codes, the sign code, and the Unified Development Code. Having

residents involved results in better codes. Our team is ready, and we certainly have a community that is ready as well. This will be a daunting, but exciting task for us – an opportunity to improve the relationship we have with San Antonians.

Nothing, however, could have been accomplished without our staff, and internal and external partners. Thank you to our customers – the large- and small-scale contractors, owners of large-scale developers and homeowners rehabbing their homes, neighborhood groups and community leaders. We have always worked together, but throughout these past tough couple of years, we have truly partnered. I look forward in continuing this collaboration to become a stronger, better department.

*Mike*

“

This year we made a big turn to e-business as we integrated all our services into BuildSA.

Michael Shannon, PE, CBO  
Director

”



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SE WE HAD REACHED



# 02

## Overview

The Development Services Department (DSD) is charged to protect the health, safety, and quality of life of San Antonians by reviewing proposed projects in our city and giving authority for land developments, building and occupying buildings, and enforcing property maintenance and building-related codes. DSD has 456 team members allocated within the following divisions:

### LAND DEVELOPMENT

Reviews and approves master development plans, plats, tree preservation, zoning, street and traffic reviews, policy administration and related construction inspections.

### PLAN REVIEW

Assures building permits comply with city requirements, specifically building codes and the Unified Development Code.

### FIELD SERVICES

Handles building and trade inspection to ensure minimum standards of the City's building related codes are met. Also, manages Graffiti Abatement and Code Enforcement Sections to administer the San Antonio Property Maintenance Code.

### SUPPORT SERVICES

Manages daily operations for fiscal, innovation, public outreach, media, communications, training, open records, performance measures, BuildSA, and the annual budget process.

### OUR MISSION

Partnering with our community to build and maintain a safer San Antonio

### OUR VISION

Caring for our vibrant city as the leader in development, safety and service.



# Executive Team



(L-R) Amin Tohmaz, PE, CBO - Deputy Director; Crystal Gonzales, PE, CBO - Asst. Director, Plan Review; Alma Martinez-Jimenez - Asst. to the Director, Support Services; Melissa Mota Ramirez - Asst. Director, Land Development; Michael Shannon, PE, CBO - Director.

## ACCREDITATIONS

We continue to be among the top 25 accredited building departments in the nation and one of three in Texas.

DSD was first accredited by the International Accreditation Service (IAS) in 2010 for plan review, permitting, and inspection services. Since then, we have been reaccredited five times. IAS continues to recognize us as a national leader, highlighting the Quality Control Review Program as a cornerstone of quality management and best practice.

Available only since 2019, the Code Enforcement Section applied and was accredited in 2020 by IAS for the enforcement of the City's ordinances and property maintenance codes. It was the first major city, first in the state, and fourth in the country.

The IAS accreditation process recognizes an organization operating at a high level of organizational, legal and technical standards.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) rates the effectiveness of building codes enforcement to include: building codes administration, training and education, and staff levels. Reevaluated every five years, DSD was in 2016 the first in the State to earn the highest classification from ISO for commercial.

Currently, we are undergoing review for reaccreditation for IAS and ISO. Results expected in FY 2022.



## 03

## Development

**MEETINGS TRANSITION BACK TO IN-PERSON**

Board and Commission meetings began transitioning to in-person in August of this year. These included the Board of Adjustment, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Building Standards Board, Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board (BRFCAAB), and Historic Design & Review Commission. In partnership with the Government and Public Affairs Department and the Office of Historic Preservation, the video conference platform and public input process created for virtual meetings will continue.

Live streaming and broadcasting will remain as a standard.

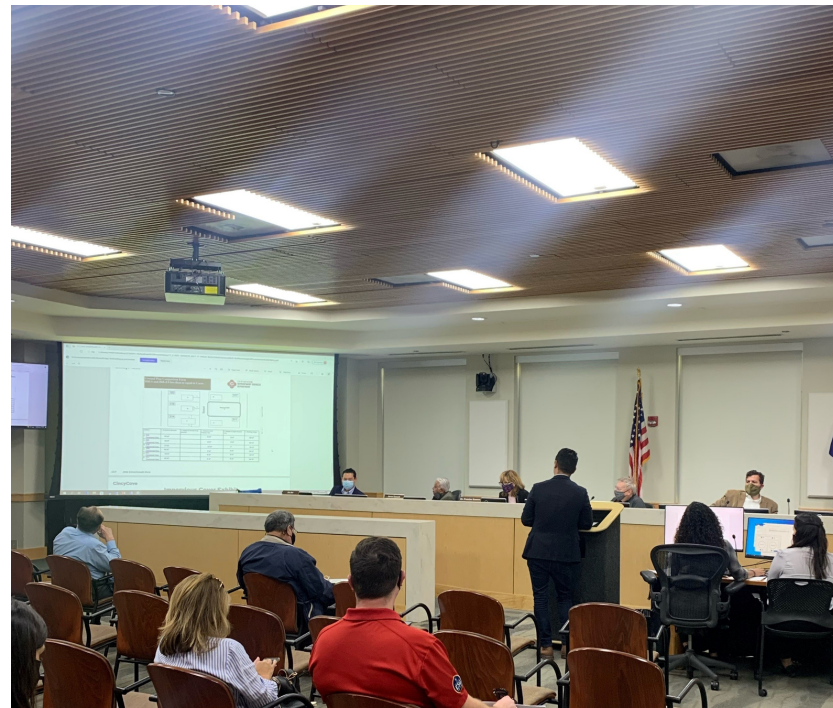
**NEW COMMISSIONERS JOIN PLANNING COMMISSION**

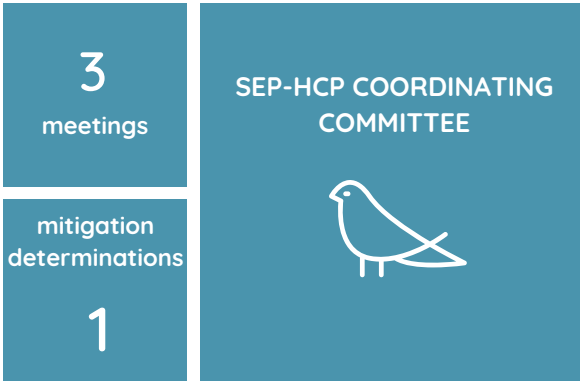
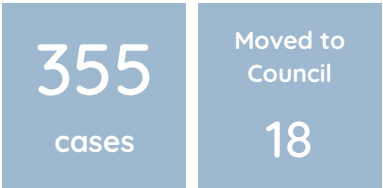
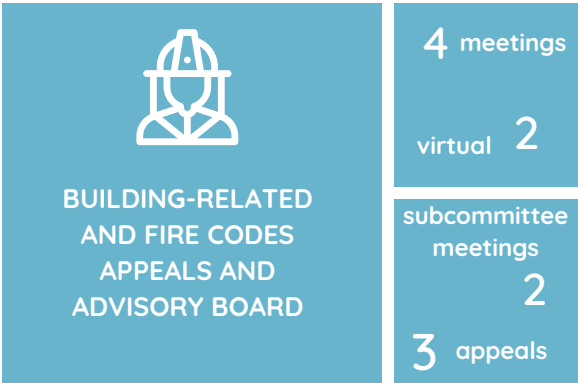
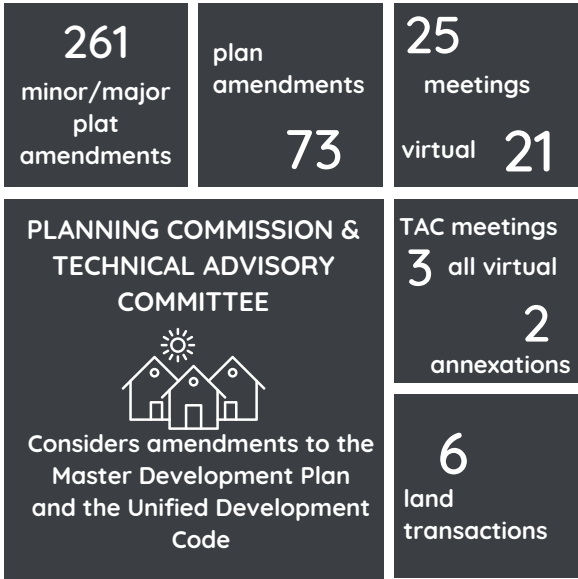
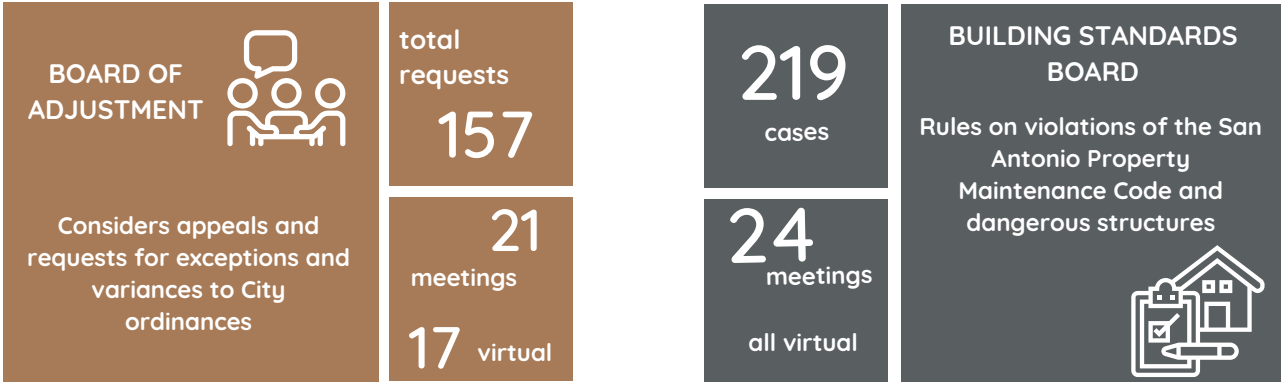
On Dec. 3, 2020, Council reappointed three members and appointed two new ones to the Planning Commission. George Peck, Pro-Tem, Julia Carrillo, and Matthew Proffitt return, joining new members Meredith Siegel and Samer Dessouky.



“San Antonio continues to grow rapidly. In 2021, we facilitated close to \$3 billion dollars worth of commercial development alone.”

Melissa Mota Ramirez -  
Asst. Director - Land  
Development”







## PARTNERSHIPS

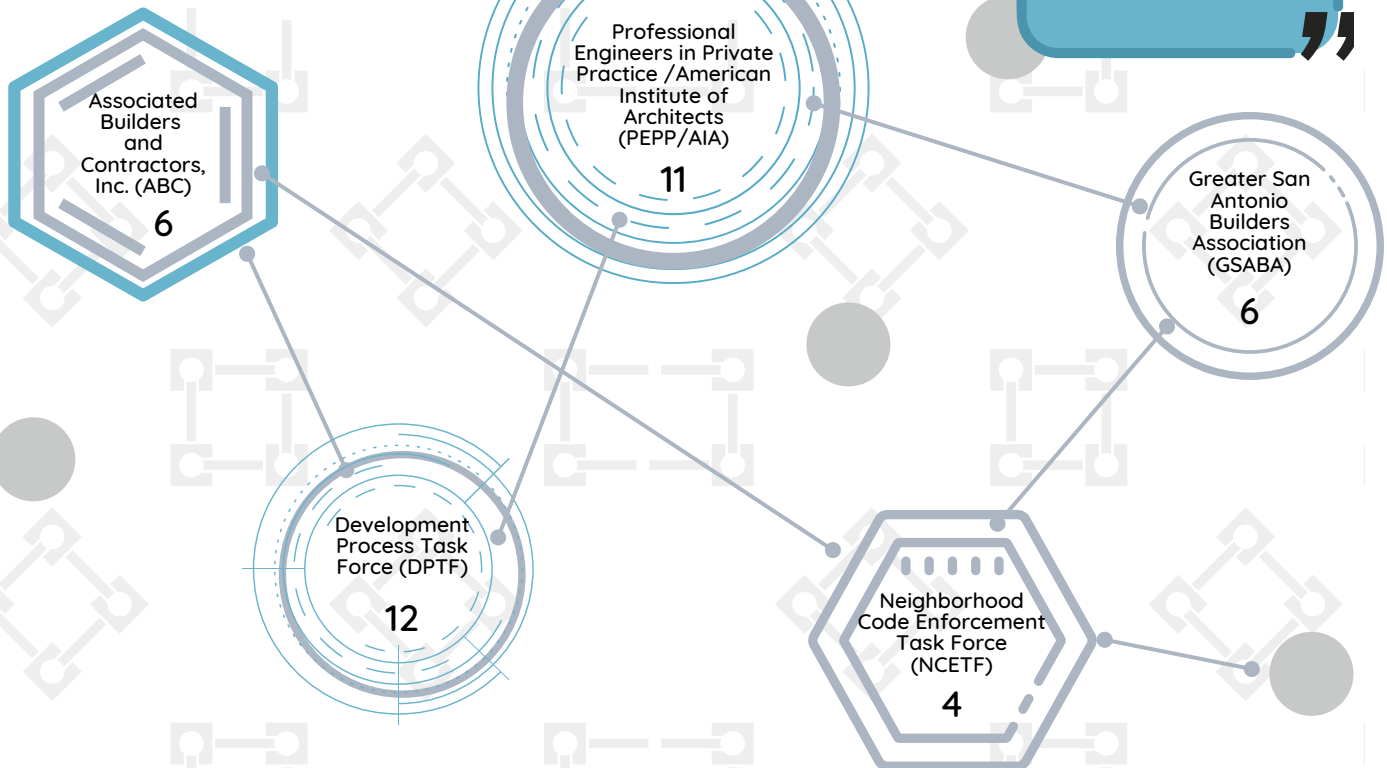
Working closely with residents and the development community is what makes us successful in how we approach San Antonio's development. Our vision is to be the leader in development, safety and service.

As with the board and commissions, the regularly scheduled meetings with industry stakeholders began transitioning to in-person this past summer. Having this platform for discussion allows for continued communication and conversation of key initiatives with other agencies involved in the development process. These

meetings resulted in one Code Interpretation, two Rule Interpretation Decisions to streamline the development process and clarify code interpretations for our inspectors, codes officers and customers. Additionally, 36 Information Bulletins (IB) were either revised or published. IBs continue to be seen as a best practice during our IAS reaccreditation process.

“The partnership between the design community and DSD has been instrumental to the success of our projects.”

Jim Rodriguez, PE  
Consulting Engineers, Inc.



## NEW NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A new Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) was approved on May 6, 2021 for Monte Vista Terrace (NCD-10). The boundaries encompass: 55 properties bound by San Pedro Avenue and the railroad tracks to the west, East and West Hildebrand Avenue to the south, McCullough Avenue to the east, and West Olmos Drive to the north.

This designation adds another layer of design regulations for residential building development within the boundaries of Monte Vista Terrace.

## REZONING NEIGHBORHOODS

Looking at areas and rezoning them is important for making land use and development more uniform within neighborhoods. In 2021, we completed rezoning efforts interrupted by the pandemic for Monte Vista and Dignowity Hill.

Our staff has begun to analyze the zoning of 1,645 properties in Beacon Hill and Alta Vista. Meetings with the task force to review analysis, and provide recommendations are ongoing. Community meetings are

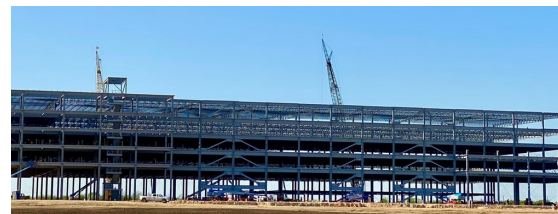
projected for spring 2022 and it is tentatively scheduled for City Council next May.

Analysis of zoning in Tobin Hill North has just begun. Meetings with task force and community will last through May 2022.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

This team is charged with helping contractors of large, complex commercial projects navigate through permit and inspection processes to ensure deadlines are met and projects do not fall behind.

A total of 211 projects were managed and 70 meetings, both in person and virtually, were held to ascertain projects followed all city codes and requirements.



(T-B) Navistar; Amazon

### SHIFTING TO E-COMMERCE

Working from home continues, with laptops provided to staff. This initiative will continue to expand in FY 2022. BuildSA has also been instrumental in allowing us to maintain the level of productivity, as shown last year. With BuildSA, customers can also track all projects in real time now that permits from the former system have been manually migrated.

With the transition to an e-commerce, we have also removed tons of paper, literally, from the building. The old vault previously used to store paper plans has been cleared out. All paper has been scanned and documents destroyed. The same can be said for other areas of the building which will be re-purposed to make room for our additional 29 positions to be hired in FY 2022.

Virtual meetings enabled staff to maintain communication with each other and customers. While board and commission meetings continued virtually for a good part of this year, we transitioned to in-person meetings with the option for members to attend virtually. Some of the positives from virtual meetings such as input from our

community by leaving messages on specific cases to be heard will continue.

Remote video inspections continue to be used extensively. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we look forward to launching a virtual hold for our customers which will allow our Call Center staff to call back our customers rather than them wait on hold for the next available representative.

### RESIDENTIAL PERMITS INCREASE

Against all odds and contrary to predictions, residential permits significantly increased this year by 42% from FY 2020. Last time we saw this was FY 2007, when we had 5,043 permits.

This translated into more residential plan reviews and inspections to make sure all new residential abided by the current adopted building codes.

“Shout-out to DSD, we couldn't have gotten our 90 acre, industrial project permitted in record time without their staff under full COVID lockdown. Hats off to the DSD group. I couldn't ask for a better city to work or live in. Thank you for all you do!

Reese Conner, PE  
Jones|Carter Engineering”



## 04

## Safety

**EMERGENCY DECLARATION ENDS**

DSD transitioned to limited in-building service and stopped doing health screenings in June. We continuously follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for the safety of our customers and staff.

Partnered with San Antonio Police Department, City Development and Operations Parking Enforcement, and Metro Health, Code Enforcement spent most of 2020 and the first three months of 2021 answering more than 17,000 calls and administering the emergency declaration

enforcement (EDE) efforts in San Antonio. Mid-year, when the EDE was finally lifted, Code Officers refocused once again in educating and enforcing San Antonio's property maintenance code. Like during the EDE, Code Enforcement continues to be charged with ensuring and maintaining the safety, health and quality of life of our residents.

**SNOW, IN SAN ANTONIO?**

Valentine's day 2021 brought a gift no one expected in San Antonio - snow, and lots of it.

For the first time in recent history, residents awoke to a city blanketed in snow. No one could have predicted the enormity of the challenges residents would face - bursting pipes leading to water shut offs, no electricity in several areas for days, and the overwhelming demand for plumbing permits and repairs to name a few.



“The enormity and complexity of enforcing the Health Emergency Declaration during the pandemic cannot be understated. I have no doubt our Code Officers saved lives.”

Amin Tohmaz, PE, CBO  
Deputy Director



With all city offices closed, staff immediately notified residents through social media, DSD's website, and media alerts of changes in permitting requirements so repairs could be completed quickly. Targeted messaging to licensed plumbers, electricians, and mechanical professionals explaining how to obtain needed permits were also sent. Permit fees for emergency plumbing repairs were waived until Mar. 5, 2021.

Property owners and licensed plumbers were reminded permits for minor emergency repairs on freeze-damaged or leaking water pipes were not needed for anything less than 5 feet in length. Emergency repairs were able to be completed before permits were obtained.

Residents were once again warned of fraudulent, unqualified contractors, or "storm chasers," coming from all over the country in search of vulnerable consumers.

#### **BEGINNING TO WORK ON THE ICC 2024 BUILDING-RELATED CODES**

It is important for a city like San Antonio to have building-related, fire and property maintenance

codes that are current and up to date to nationally accepted and accredited standards. DSD prides itself in being at the forefront of adopting the latest codes and having representation in the development of upcoming ones.

The International Code Council (ICC) reviews and updates all its codes on a three-year cycle. Director Michael Shannon and Senior Plans Examiner Vincent Trevino participated in public hearings held to review proposed changes for the 2024 I-Codes. Having an active role in the development of the codes helps in positioning our resources and services in line with latest trends. It is also a platform that supports the department's vision of remaining a leader in development services.

The Committee Action Hearings ran from April 11 through May 5, 2021.



## 05

## Service

**THE WAIT IS OVER! NO MORE  
STANDING IN LINES**

Starting in February, DSD customers needing services were introduced to QLess, a virtual check in software enabling entering a queue from anywhere using a PC, laptop or mobile device without the need to visit the One Stop to get in line. By uploading the app, clients can move freely while getting SMS text notifications providing real-time updates, including wait time, placement in queue, and when it is their turn. Some of the services provided include appointments for zoning, permits, Certificates of

Occupancy, and more. QLess will be expanding to other city departments next year. DSD was the first in the City to use QLess.

**LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

The 87th Texas Legislative Session ended on May 31, 2021. DSD tracked more than 100 bills with potential impact to development. Major bills that passed were:

- HB 636 (Plumbing Board): extension of the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners
- HB 1474 (Historic): altering process for designation of a historic landmark or district
- HB 1475 (BOA): added new criteria for variance considerations
- SB 291 (Developers must post signs): name and contact information for commercial projects



BuildSA enables us to be more transparent and efficient in our plan review process. Customers can quickly access our comments, submit revisions, and easily track the progress through the portal. By only accepting digital plans, we have become more sustainable.

Crystal Gonzales, PE, CBO  
Asst. Director - Plan Review



## BUILD SA

BuildSA was at the forefront for implementation of the second and final phase. Code Enforcement made its BuildSA debut toward the end of September 2020, affording our officers a well-rounded, one-stop system for managing investigation cases.

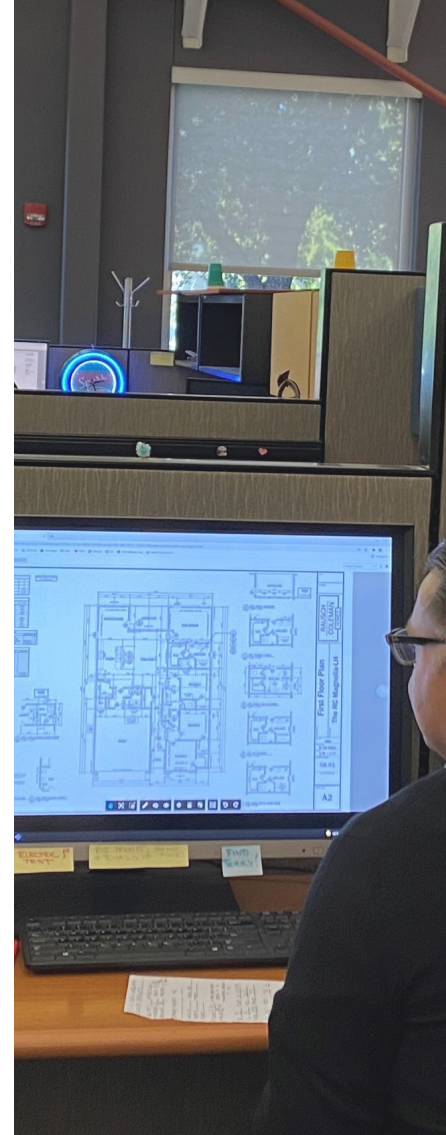
Development Services completed the last major BuildSA release on Nov. 30, 2020, and transitioned to an integrated e-business solution. Contractor licenses migrated into BuildSA, giving customers the ease to pull all building and fire permits through the portal, as well as the ability to renew their licenses. Electronic plan review was integrated as well, asking customers to upload plans online in lieu of paper plans. By doing this, customers can follow the approval, review and markup process and status of their plans in real time.

The new platform replaces Hansen and other systems giving one entry point for all land development, permitting, and code enforcement services. A total of 625 DSD staff and partnering agency users (CPS Energy, Bexar County, SAWS, OHP, Public Works, SAPD, Aviation and

the Fire Marshal's Office) perform a task or utilize BuildSA to locate property information. Since going live, more than 21,400 citizens have registered for an online customer portal account.

Any software change is a huge undertaking for any organization. Our BuildSA Team continues to assist in this effort by hosting 579 hours of training sessions for 4,679 for our customers, stakeholders and organizations including the Greater San Antonio Builders Association (GSABA), the Associated Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors of San Antonio (PHCC) and Texas Air Conditioning Contractors Association (TACCA). We also maintain regular system migrations to resolve critical issues regarding building applications, permits and inspections.

DSD is, and remains, committed to supporting users and continuously evaluating the need for additional training and resources. Our goal is to make doing business with us easy and efficient. Many enhancements made to BuildSA result from feedback received.



“DSD has implemented a valuable system in BuildSA. Years of stakeholder input and extensive testing, combined with DSD's detailed training, resulted in an innovative system that saves time and effort for all involved in the process.

Diane Hoskins, CIC CRM, Hon. AIA  
San Antonio”

### ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING STUDENTS DEVELOP UNMANNED ROVER FOR BUILDING INSPECTIONS

This past school year, we had the opportunity to partner with St. Mary's University School of Engineering for the Senior Engineer Design Project program, where graduating engineering students must put theory into practice. Our team was comprised of Nicolas Fabbri, Benjamin Kibler, Robert Mendoza, and Scott Tudar, under the guidance of professors Dr. Juan Ocampo De Los Rios and Dr. Ben Abbot, and DSD's Engineer Jeremy McDonald.

Multiple meetings were held to discuss needs and design. The end result was a successful rover prototype, with video capabilities, that can enter tunnels and dangerous properties remotely by using a DSD standard issued iPad. The rover is capable of measuring the size and pitch of a pipe for plumbing work in tunnels and also includes an aerial vehicle to assist with inspecting buildings that have limited access to a ground-based vehicle. We hope to enhance this prototype as we continue our partnership with St. Mary's University.



06

## Coming in 2022

### UPDATING THE DIFFERENT CODES

- Unified Development Code
- 2021 ICC Building-related codes
- San Antonio Property Maintenance Code
- Sign Code

### NOISE ORDINANCE

Staff will continue working with task force on proposed amendment and recommendations.

### STREET LIGHTING INDEX

Assessment to identify where potential lighting may be warranted in neighborhoods.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

New team to facilitate these projects through development process.

retirements



452

years of experience



Teresa Kannawin  
Plan Review Division  
Assistant Director

Thank you Terry, for your contributions over the years.

41	Roland Alonzo Field Services Division Code Enforcement Section	21	Hector Hernandez Land Development Division Zoning Section	15	Mario Gonzalez Field Services Division Building Inspections Section
38	John Valadez Field Services Division Building Inspections Section	20	Daniel Chapa Field Services Division Graffiti Section	15	Fernando Garza Field Services Division Building Inspections Section
33	John Long Field Services Division Building Inspections Section	20	Teresa Kannawin Plan Review Division Assistant Director	14	Jose Garza Field Services Division Graffiti Section
33	Olivia Rodriguez Plan Review Division Plan Review Intake Section	19	John Thompson Field Services Division Building Inspections Section	14	William Richter Field Services Division Building Inspections Section
27	David Rohde Field Services Division Building Inspections Section	19	Juan Votion Field Services Division Building Inspections Section	3	Tony Felts Land Development Division Policy Administration
26	Antonette Villarreal Plan Review Division Plan Review Section	17	Gary Kreutziger Field Services Division Building Inspections Section		
23	Evelia Kelnhofer Field Services Division Code Enforcement Section	16	Juanita Romero Land Development Division Zoning Section		
22	Josefa Bampi Support Services Division Fiscal Section	16	Cecil Miller Field Services Division Building Inspections Section		





# DSD by the Numbers



**OUR BUDGET**

The budget is comprised of three funds:

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUND**

Generated from fees and payments for services like zoning, plan review, permitting, and building inspections.

**GENERAL FUND**

Funds the Code Enforcement Section, graffiti abatements, and the programs for mobile living parks and boarding homes.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT**

Provides code enforcement within eligible areas.

Our original budget estimates for the year were much lower due to the anticipated negative financial impact expected from the pandemic. The totals used for FY 2021 budget reflects the final estimate.

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FUND**

**GENERAL FUND – CODE ENFORCEMENT**

	FY 2021 BUDGET (in millions)	FY 2021 ACTUALS (in millions)	FY 2022 BUDGET (in millions)
<b>REVENUES</b>			
Development Services	41 906,530	44 332,098	40 154,621
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Operating Expenses	38 625,786	37 775,192	42 483,624
<b>REVENUES</b>			
General Fund	1 605,939	1 745,828	1 840,873
Community Development Block Grant	125,000	76,725	125,000
General Fund – Supported Revenues	12 302,699	11 486,546	13 610,553
Total	14 033,638	13 309,099	15 576,426
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Community Development Block Grant	125,000	76,725	125,000
General Fund	13 908,638	13 232,374	15 451,426
Total	14 033,638	13 309,099	15 576,426



42%↑  
from FY 2020

5,946  
issued

residential permits

17%↑  
from FY  
2020



3,209  
issued

commercial permits

total permits issued

137,442

33%↑  
from FY  
2020



contractor connect



117  
registered plus

3,379  
registered  
9 premier

land development



technical review for:

	Goal	FY 2021
major plats	20 calendar days	16
minor plats	10 business days	6

554  
violations



139 plumbing



127 mechanical



134 electrical



154 building

strike team



contractor  
consultations

339

265 locations in violation

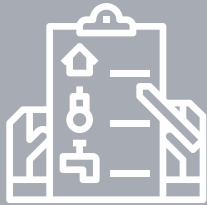
customers served by  
permit counter

25,865



## inspections performed

95% goal



plumbing

FY 2021  
total

89,986

% met

83%

RVIs

4,111



electrical

62,653

89%

12,399



mechanical

32,157

98%

2,857



building

57,070

96%

5,828

TOTAL

241,866

90%

25,195

## code enforcement\*

\*numbers impacted by  
Enforcement of Public  
Health Emergency  
Declaration



tier 1 (health & safety issues)

GOAL

2 business days

FY 2021

8



tier 2 (building maintenance code)

3 business days

8



tier 1 & tier 2 proactive rate

65%

35%



tier 1 & tier 2 compliance rate

80% in 45 days

74%



graffiti sites abated

50,000

42,306



graffiti turnaround time

3 days

1

## initial plan review & customer service



residential

GOAL

3 business days

FY 2021

3



commercial

18 calendar days

16



calls answered

113,284



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT & YEAR IN REVIEW

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Partnering with our community to build  
and maintain a safer San Antonio

